

High Tide in the Galleries

Groups of Recent And Other Paintings

By Royal Cortissoz

The high art that spells high finance is very much in evidence just now. Mr. John McCormack has bought a portrait by Frans Hals, the half length of a man, in the collection of the Polish Count Zameyski, and has paid \$150,000 for it. Only a little while ago Mr. Joseph Widener paid \$750,000 for two Rembrandts, and now Mr. H. E. Huntington is reported to have given almost as much for a single canvas—\$728,000 for Gainsborough's "Blue Boy." The new most interesting bits of news about the last mentioned masterpiece are of very differing significance. It isn't at all cheering to learn that the picture is to go to the owner's California home. That is good for the Pacific Slope, but it will make the "Blue Boy" almost as inaccessible to most people as it has been in Grosvenor House. The exhibition promised in New York will be only a passing mitigation. On the other hand, it is altogether delightful to know that, as Sir Joseph Duveen has announced, the varnish of generations is to be removed from the "Blue Boy." This ought to give us a revelation of extraordinary beauty. As a stimulating pendant to these episodes in the picture market we must mention the total obtained at the Southern sale of antiques, \$232,000. If this is to set the pace, then the season of 1921-'22 will break the record of a year ago, and that was phenomenal.

The New Society

Vigor the Keynote of Its Latest Exhibition

There is a piece of sculpture by Mr. Mahonri Young in the third annual exhibition of the New Society of Artists at the Wildenstein gallery which perfectly symbolizes the whole tone of this organization. "Alcmena," it is called, a classical subject treated to some extent in the classical manner. Mr. Young has dipped into that fount of archaic inspiration of which Mr. Maniship and divers others have made so much. But the modeling is also eloquent of modern naturalism. The sculptor is as energetic a realist as though he had never dallied with the antique. He vitalizes his rather academic motif by individuality and an essentially progressive outlook. Feeling for nature is at the bottom of his art. The beauty of this "Alcmena" is largely the beauty of life. We admire the sculpture for its own sake, and incidentally, as we have said, it points to the broad merit of the exhibition.

There is an interesting difference between the New Society and the Society of American Artists, its predecessor long ago in the registering of a protest against established conservatism. The former malcontents were deeply concerned in the skillful manipulation of pigment; they made much of the beauty of mere painted surface. They were wise in this. Their choice gave to technique the dignity belonging to it. That solicitude for painted surface may decline into preciosity is a circumstance offering no difficulties to the connoisseur of painting. He is not beguiled by the niggling refinements of a dabster into misunderstanding the solid merits of, say, an Alfred Stevens. The New Society most emphatically affirms its newness in its indifference to this aspect of technique. Few of the exhibitors here seem to care two straws for the character of their surfaces.

Mr. Hassam is one of the few, but he belongs to what is now the "old guard," the company that rebelled against the Academy. He sends some pleasant little nudes, capital notes, but not exactly of his best. His most satisfactory picture is the "Self Portrait," which dates from 1898, and that clever interior might, we fear, be cited against the hypothesis of painter's painting to which we have been alluding, the subject being lost in a penumbra of "brown sauce." In another key, much higher and more luminous, is the "East-er Sunday" of Mr. Gari Melchers. It was painted, we gather, not long before the war and it recalls an even earlier period in the artist's career. The picture is full of high notes charmingly adjusted. What especially strikes us is the way in which the brilliant color scheme is truly enveloped, made a unit of pictorial and sensuous appeal. This is a characteristic souvenir of the mode the Society of American Artists stood for. The picturesque subject is sufficiently exploited, but one recognizes above all the ardent technician, painting with enjoyment of his materials, with an infectious gusto.

The New Society, as a body, seems more concerned with life than with art, a fact which we state neither in praise nor in disparagement, but simply as the indication of a prevailing state of mind. Here and there an exhibitor might seem to contradict the observation. There is Mr. Leon Kroll, giving to his surfaces something like polish, a full-bodied, glistening character. He is accomplished, too. The figured dress in his "Morning in Midsummer" suggests an alert student of Manet and Degas. Mr. Van Perrine also, in his autumnal landscapes, is obviously bent upon exhorting from a thick, ridgy impasto—the tapestrylike effect it may be made to yield, and his efforts as a colorist are fairly successful, being further heightened by a very personal interpretation of landscape sentiment. There are the portraits and the nude painted by Mr. Robert Henri, examples of brisk virtuosity in brushwork if not in the caressing of surface. Mr. Sterner counts in the small group of painters interested in method. His "Portrait of Hari Govind Govil," attractive as a pattern of color, leaves an even deeper impression through the treatment of the head. It is the best piece of construction and drawing he

has ever put upon canvas. But there the brief list of technicians in love with technique ends. The men who make the atmosphere of the place are all for the truth and the world well lost.

Dr. Johnson's philosopher admitted, half-shamefacedly, that "cheerfulness was always creeping in." We can't help wishing that beauty would always creep in. But the truth, boldly set down, is an inspiring thing by itself. On this occasion it is particularly comforting to note the boldness just mentioned, the vigor, the masculine directness and force. There isn't an atom of charm about the two big portraits Mr. Bellows sends to the show, but there is no denying the exhilaration in the power they express. So it is with the paintings by Mr. George Luks, Mr. John Sloan, Mr. Eugene Speicher and Mr. Rockwell Kent. They have a kind of rough strength in them if they have nothing else. The modernist group has, inevitably, something to say for itself, through Messrs. McFee, Halpert and Maurice Sterne. It is not, on the whole, at all inspiring. Mr. Sterne is more amusing in his drawings than in his painting. There is a slight, engaging sensation to be drawn from the painters in another category—the men who are not bothered about theory, but have some technical accomplishment and are content to paint likable pictures. These practitioners are such men as Jonas Lie, who is getting a finer quality into his paint, as witness the sky in his "Sycamores in Storm"; Hayley Lever, Paul Dougherty and Reynolds Beal. Mr. F. C. Friscke's "Girl at Her Toilet" is a trifle disconcerting. What, we wonder, is so daintily decorative a thing doing in this robust gallery?

One virtue of the New Society is that, despite rather limited space, it contrives to achieve variety. Mr. Young has a number of welcome colleagues—James E. Fraser, Edmund Quinn, Andrew O'Connor, Gaston La-chaise, Hunt Diederich and Stirling Calder—all of whom send interesting sculptures, many of which we have seen before, but are glad to see again. There are drawings, also, concentrated in one room—a really admirable little collection. Mr. Joseph Pennell appears as a water colorist and shows some East River subjects so charmingly handled that one hopes he will use the medium more and more. That, indeed, is the cordial spirit in which we stroll through this exhibition and leave it. It contains, as we have indicated, more of life than of beauty. But at least life is there.

Versatility

Portraits and Decorations by Wilfrid de Glehn

The competent craftsman gives a special pleasure to the constant observer of contemporary painting. There is in the world of art so much more mediocrity than ability. Mr. Wilfrid de Glehn, who is having an exhibition at the Durand-Ruel gallery, is the type of artist who does not ask us to "make allowances." He knows his trade. It

Alcmena



(From the sculpture by Mahonri Young at the Wildenstein Gallery)

is a blunt tribute but we offer it wholeheartedly. In the development of his craft he has profited, obviously, by the example of John Sargent. The fact is equally unmistakable in his portraits and in his watercolors. But it is a fact which makes itself manifest without lessening in any way our enjoyment of what he does. One may be content to recall a famous master when one has work to show that is intrinsically so good.

The virtue of a portrait by Mr. de Glehn is that it is soundly constructed, built up as it were from within, and that it is painted with a spirited attack upon technical problems, fluent, firmly, so that the resultant effect is both spontaneous and exact. There is one portrait of a man, the "Roger Quilter," to show in its crisp definition how skillfully he can deal with a simple subject and match its severity by the directness of his touch. The rest of the portraits are all of women, examples of nervous grace and elegance. A hasty impression would leave them in the memory as the decorative studies of pretty figures. Closely studied they reveal more lasting merits. There is character in them. They are well drawn. And the "brio" in Mr. de Glehn's brushwork is a satisfaction in

itself. There are a couple of pictures in the show, a delightfully sunny "Fishing," and an interior, "The Oak Room," which illustrates in Mr. de Glehn's own clever way a vein made popular by Mr. Tarbell and others, and the water colors—more numerous than the oils—form an interesting collection of English and Continental travel notes. The artist is peculiarly reminiscent of Sargent in his Italian and French water colors. "Le Grand Vase—Versailles," might have been painted by the great man himself. This is only another way of saying that Mr. de Glehn has an amazing gift. We know no other water colorist who could so triumphantly match Sargent on his own ground.

The decorative panels exhibited—four of them—occupy a place apart. Here again we are aware, but more faintly, of external influences. "Le Parc" is a bewitching little echo of Frago. "The Birth of Venus" harks back, vaguely, to Boucher. Looking at "L'île Enchantée" we think for a moment of the Virgilian sentiment of

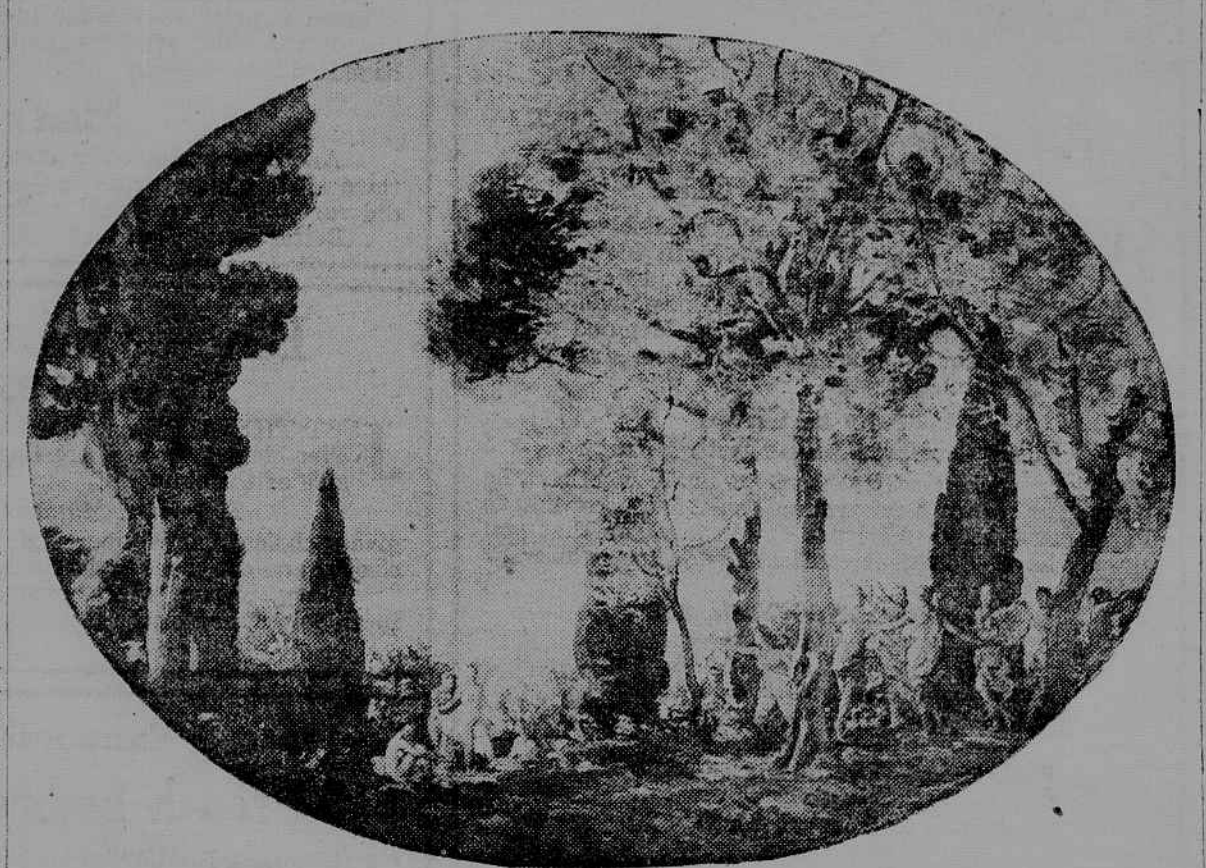
suggestion here of the progress he was to make in the modulation of tone. Form, rather than color, we should say, was for a long time his major problem.

The Salmagundians have made this so admirable an affair that we would not be ungracious about an item in it, but we must confess that we long to hang the pictures, placing them in a sequence governed by their dates. Some such disposition of them would have placed the last touch to their historical usefulness. One would have seen then, at a glance, how Murphy enriched his tone, giving it greater and greater depth and quality. As a mere picture maker we are not sure that he was as evenly progressive. "The Last Glow," for example, which seems to belong to his middle period, has a charm of composition which is seldom encountered in the landscapes he painted in more recent years. It is a pattern in brown and gold, exquisite of its kind. The later pictures, compared with this and with certain others, confirm the judgment expressed more

than once in these columns, that he tended toward a somewhat mannered mode of painting.

Just so long as he retained the impetus declared in his early drawings, an impetus toward the accurate delineation of tree forms, he gave an absolutely convincing body to even his most freely synthesized impressions. It slackened when he crystallized his habit and painted too many "Murphys." These last are often beautiful pieces of tone. On the other hand a good deal of the artist's old "natural magic" appears to have been squeezed out of them. This exhibition is far from being "all of a piece." It denotes a temperament that decidedly had its ups and downs. The important point is that the show makes these clear. Students of American landscape who want to understand Murphy for what he was would do well to visit the Salmagundi Club and to traverse the collection with a careful regard for the dates, some inscribed on the canvas and others discoverable in the catalogue.

L'île Enchantée



(From the painting by Wilfrid de Glehn at the Durand-Ruel Gallery)

Menard. But before the charming "Hydrangeas" we think only of Mr. de Glehn, and as a matter of fact, after some reflection, we apprehend the other panels with the same freedom from old associations, they are painted with such instinctive zest, with such command over form, with such true decorative faculty. If there are reservations suggested by any of them it is in the case of "The Birth of Venus," which is a bit overcrowded. Only the excess of motives in this keeps it from being a brilliant success. "L'île Enchantée" evokes no reservations at all. It is in absolute harmony with its poetic title, a romantic landscape enlivened by figures in perfect proportion, unobtrusive actors in an imaginative scene. Mr. de Glehn is nowhere more felicitously the master of his instruments than in this lovely design.

J. F. Murphy

A Memorial Show at the Salmagundi

A really invaluable service has been rendered to the memory of J. Francis Murphy in an exhibition arranged at the Salmagundi Club. The committee in charge might so easily have overshot the mark, assembling a quantity of his later things on the plausible pretext of "showing him at his best." Instead of that a sagacious effort has been made actually to reveal the man at full length, to illustrate the beginning, the middle and the end of his art. There are only about fifty numbers in the catalogue, but within this limited scope the Salmagundi exhibition enables us to know him better than ever before.

It was an especially happy idea to include the early drawings, which disclose the point of view with which Murphy started. It was that of a zealous observer and even more zealous interpreter of natural forms. He ran the risk of missing the tree through undue minuteness in drawing its details. But the pressing danger did not overtake him. From his painstaking care in details he passed to thoroughly artistic generalization. Though it took him some years to handle landscape as mass, a picture like his "Tints of a Vanished Past," dating from 1885, echoing in its rather hard draftsmanship the too meticulous drift of his first sketches, it is plain that even then he was on the way to the breadth of his prime. Oddly, there is little

Random Impressions In Current Exhibitions

The Spring Academy opened with a private view on Friday, too late in the week to be traversed to-day in this place. Comment on the subject will be made next Sunday.

The exhibition at the Milch gallery of works by the late Abbott Thayer, which we forehanded not long ago, is now in active preparation and will be opened on December 5. It will consist of paintings, water colors and drawings, among the paintings one of the rare nudes this artist produced.

On November 28 Mr. F. Overton Colt will open an exhibition at the Montross gallery. It will consist of paintings from Indian legends and folklore.

There has just opened at the Rehn gallery an exhibition of paintings by Miss Helen M. Turner. At the Daniel Bloch there are paintings by Mr. Albert Bloch.

New paintings and monotypes by Mr. Henry A. Wight are at the Ehrich gallery. At the Weyhe gallery there is an exhibition of pencil drawings by Mr. Max von Recklinghausen. The Arts Guild gallery displays a number of portrait busts and other works of sculpture by Mr. Ernesto Begni del Piatta.

A new group is introduced at the Babcock gallery, the group of "Nanuet Painters and Sculptors." The work of one member of it, Mr. John E. Costigan, we have seen before with some appreciation. He cultivates a very thick impasto, too thick, perhaps, but he gets fairly good vibrating color out of it and his rustic figures have a neat touch of characterization about them. It would be interesting to see his talent at closer quarters with landscape forms. At present they are obscured by his mere paint; he is like the pen draughtsman who gets lost in

a maze of cross-hatching. One of two of his colleagues are presumably envious of his manner. They handle it with mild effectiveness, Mr. William H. Donahue and Mr. Walter Ballendorn. There is promise in the paintings by Mr. Daniel Kotz. Two sculptors share in the enterprise, Mr. C. A. Heber and Miss Ida Costigan. The former's "Bondage" is a powerful production, well conceived and well modeled. But the Nanuet group, as a group, hardly justifies itself.

The month's show at the Grolier Club is devoted to a collection of one hundred illustrated books, dating from 1472 to 1896. This exhibition is open to the public every week day between 10 and 6. It lasts until December 31.

The Arthur Ackermann gallery announces an exhibition of old-time coaching prints, to last from December 1 to January 15. This will be followed by an exhibition of water colors of game birds by Mr. Philip Rickman and one of etchings by Mr. Sturgis.

It is a little difficult to review the anonymous exhibition at the gallery of the Junior Art Patrons without spoiling the guessing game which it offers to the layman. The latter is invited to restore, if he can, the missing signatures. He has until the end of the month to indulge in this pastime. Then a catalogue will appear, and whoever has guessed the largest number of names correctly will receive a painting as reward. Some of the individualities involved are wholly obvious. There are pictures in the show which one could hardly miss with one's eyes shut. There are others that are unquestionably puzzling. It is an entertaining, varied collection, with a few really fine things in it. We have in mind the composition of nudes by Mr. X, a wintry landscape by another Mr. X, and a beautiful Parisian snow scene by still another Mr. X. The pictures

are worth seeing, quite apart from the guessing.

The works of a young Russian sculptor, Mr. Gleb Derujinsky, will be shown at the Milch gallery from November 21 to December 3. He studied in Paris under Injalbert and Vediet and received some counsel from Rodin. Portraits—including one of Theodore Roosevelt—statuettes and classical subjects will appear in his show.

An excellent collection of American paintings hangs at the Ferragil gallery. Over the mantel there is a magnificent Inness, the "Old Farm at Montclair," painted in 1895. It dominates the room as a full orchestra dominates a single instrument. But there are some beguiling things on the walls, a perfect example of Arthur B. Davies, one of the handsomest things Gari Melchers ever painted, and good pieces by Hassam, Weir, Twachtman and Carlsen. There are also shown again the numerous "war bronzes" by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney which she exhibited in her studio some time ago, spirited, picturesque statuettes which are appropriately brought forth apropos of Armistice Day and the Washington conference.

Next Saturday there will open at the American Art Galleries an exhibition of antique and modern furniture, with other artistic property, belonging to the firm of D. S. Hess & Co. Flemish, French and Renaissance objects are included in this reorganization sale, which is scheduled to take place on the afternoons of December 2 and 3.

Wednesday evening, November 30 is set for the sale at the American Art Galleries of the remaining portion of the naval collection of Mr. V. Winthrop Newman, of London and New York. There will be 123 drawings sold, examples of Van de Velde, Turner, Bakhuizen, Starfield, Rowlandson, Prout and others.

American sporting pictures by W. J. Hays, A. N. A., on view at the Brown-Robertson gallery, are particularly interesting from a present day point of view. Here is pictured an old subject in a thoroughly modern guise. The actings are the rolling hills and farm country of Dutchess County, the playground of the Millbrook Hunt Club. The subjects are essentially American in spirit and character, though all of the romance and color of the traditional old-world sport are preserved. The modern note is accentuated through the artist's observation that no modern American countryside is without its mechanical aspect. It is curiously interesting to see in these picturizations of horses and hounds the occasional introduction of the motor car. Fortunately, however, once the chase is under way this alien aspect falls away beside an imposing vista of rolling autumn landscape and sun-tinted clouds. Mr. Hays's paintings have the mark of familiarity and understanding that gives them reality and conviction.

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In the predominating group of water colors these observations are thrown into the foreground. They reveal vividly the casual sidelights of the chase. One for instance, "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down," portrays an ingenious rider taking a short cut over a barbed wire fence, which he has first thrown into view by dismounting and, placing his crimson coat over one wire. It is such observations as this that make the work of Mr. Hays doubly

interesting. There are also seven oils, all softer in tone and more decorative than the watercolors. "The Run" is an especially decorative landscape in autumn browns. Faintly out of the distant dusk appears the flash of animation and color that betokens the approaching chase. The artist has done also several dog and horse portraits, and there is a new set of six prints of the hunt, the first to be issued depicting this sport in America.

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